

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

Example of a “Sustainable Landscape Certification Checklist” that may be used to certify residential and commercial water efficient landscapes

Yard Certification Checklist: Does Your Yard Measure Up?

To be recognized as a “certified” McHenry County Green Yard, the new or existing home or commercial landscape must:

- Accumulate at least 36 inches on this Yardstick Checklist.
- Obtain the required minimum number of inches in each category.
- Comply with all existing codes, laws, and ordinances.

Water Efficiently (15 inches possible 5 minimum)

For a yard that does not use an irrigation system

The landscape is designed to subsist predominantly on rainfall once plants are established.

15"

For a yard that does use an irrigation system (inground or automatic overhead sprinklers or drip irrigation)

Irrigation system has been audited within the past 24 months.

2"

Irrigation system is designed and installed by an EPA WaterSense partner individual/company.

2"

Installed irrigation system meets or exceeds all local regulations or WaterSmart/ WaterSense standards (in areas without regulations).

2"

Rain shutoff device installed and operational for inground irrigation systems.

1"

Innovative irrigation technology (soil moisture sensors, ET controllers, or other automated method) installed to manage irrigation.

3"

Turf and landscape areas zoned separately based on plant water requirements.

2"

Microirrigation installed in plant and flower beds.

2"

Irrigation system does not water hardscape surfaces.

1"

Mulch (7 inches possible - 4 minimum)

By-product/alternative mulches used such as pine bark, pine needles, compost, or shredded

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

wood debris.

2"

Mulch is applied correctly to a depth of 2" to 4" (depending on mulch type).

2"

Four-inch clear space left for air between plant bases and the mulch.

2"

Self-mulching areas created under trees where leaves can remain as they fall.

1"

Till/incorporate 2 to 3 inches of organic amendment (compost) to a depth of 6-8 inches.

2-3"

Recycle (7 inches possible 1 minimum)

All of removed topsoil was saved and reused on existing site.

1-2"

50% of cleared material reused for mulch/landscape.

1-2"

The homeowner utilizes a compost bin to dispose of/reuse yard waste.

1"

Off-site salvage materials or remanufactured materials used to construct landscape features such

as retaining walls, paved areas, decks, gazebos, trellises or furniture.

1-2"

Wildlife (4 inches possible 2 minimum)

Non-invasive plants, vines, shrubs and trees planted to provide cover, nesting areas or food sources for birds, butterflies and wildlife.

1-3"

Water source provided for wildlife such as a small pond, fountain, or bird bath.

1"

Right Plant Right Place (24 inches possible 12 minimum)

Landscape does not contain invasive plants identified at

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/unitedstates/il.shtml>

2"

Trees and shrubs used to shade the eastern and western walls of a home/building and the area surrounding air conditioner compressor.

1"

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

Deciduous trees used on southern exposures to allow the sun to passively heat the home in winter.

1"

Wind resistant trees planted in areas where falling trees could impact the home/building.

1"

Native plants that are water efficient are preserved during building construction and included in landscape. (Tree protection zones maintained during construction)

1-3"

Credit for heritage trees, trees with greater than 4"dbh (diameter at breast height), groups of trees, and native shrubs and groundcovers.

1-3"

Plants selected for the yard are suited for site conditions, reducing the need for water, fertilizer, pesticides, and pruning.

1-3"

Amount of turf area is appropriate for the site. Low maintenance groundcovers, shrubs and mulch installed in remainder of yard. Turf avoided in shady areas. Turf area complies with local regulations.

1-3"

Evenly shaped turf areas with no turf on steep berms or in long, narrow areas (less than 4' wide).

2"

In wildfire prone areas, low flammability plants installed. Minimum 30' of defensible space present around home or building.

1-3"

Plants installed at least 2'-3' from the foundation and roof overhangs.

1"

Illinois Green Industry BMPs followed for landscape installation.

1"

Fertilizing (9 inches possible 2 minimum)

Soil tested for pH, lime requirements, and soil fertility. Testing of soil water infiltration rates also recommended. Results provided & explained to the buyer.

1-2"

Soil amendments used to improve selected areas for landscaping (if needed).

2"

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

Measures were taken to avoid unnecessary soil compaction during construction.

2"

Controlled release fertilizers used as needed (preference for CR over soluble forms)

1"

Cultivate any previously compacted areas to increase porosity.

1"

Stormwater Runoff (12 inches possible - 5 minimum)

Show that best management practices for erosion control were followed during construction.

2"

Downspouts and gutters have been directed to drain onto the lawn, plant beds, or containment areas. Outfall must be 2+ feet from foundation.

1"

Swales, terraces and/or rain gardens created to catch and filter stormwater.

1-2"

Storage provided for harvested water in a rain barrel, cistern or above ground tank.

1-2"

Underground distribution tanks installed to collect stormwater.

2"

Mulch, bricks, flagstones, gravel, or other porous surfaces used on walkways, patios or drives.

2"

All rain and storm water drains away from the building foundation using legal drainage conveyance systems onsite

2"

On the Waterfront Seashore, Canals, Ponds, Lakes, Rivers (9 inches possible 2 minimum if applicable)

Invasive exotic aquatic plants removed or not present.

2"

A border of low maintenance plants established between the lawn and shoreline/seawall to absorb nutrients and provide wildlife habitat.

2"

Native vegetation planted along part or the entire littoral zone in front of the seawall or along the shoreline. (May require permit.)

1-3"

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

Clean, native limestone rock (rip rap) placed in front of the seawall to decrease wave action and increase habitat. (May require permit or SSL authorization.)

2"

Yard Care (8 inches possible 5 minimum)

For yards where a homeowner association or contractor provides yard maintenance

Language in homeowner association covenants or legal contracts requires landscape maintenance

contractors to follow Illinois Green Industries Best Management Practices for:

- o Operation and maintenance of the in-ground irrigation system
- o Mulching, mowing, and pruning of turf and plants
- o Fertilizing
- o Pest control including Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Points awarded for requiring that landscape maintenance contractors be certified per accepted terminology in the WCC. Extension staff can assist in providing language for covenants and contracts.

1-6"

Homeowner association covenants allow backyard composting (if applicable).

1"

Homeowner association covenants allow residents to have yards with no turf.

1"

For a yard where the homeowner is responsible for maintenance

Owner provided with a copy of the as-built irrigation plan, operating manual, and instructions on how to operate the irrigation system's timers/controllers.

2"

Educational materials provided to owners on wildlife present in subdivision.

1"

Educational materials and/or workshops provided to owners on recommended McHenry County Green Yard practices:

1" o watering

1" o mowing (including grass cycling), mulching, and composting

Appendix 3.4 – Examples of Sustainable Landscaping Certification Checklist

- 1" o maintenance of shrubs and trees including pruning
- 1" o pest control including integrated pest management (IPM)
- 1" o fertilizing methods
- 1" o stormwater runoff

Extension staff can provide assistance with educational materials and workshops.

TOTAL INCHES-----

Remember, to be recognized as a “certified” McHenry County Green Yard, you must have at least 36 inches totaled from this Yardstick Checklist.